



Testimony of
Ed Hawthorne, President
Connecticut AFL-CIO

Education Committee
March 1, 2023

SB 1096 An Act Concerning the Charter School Approval Process

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey and members of the Education Committee. My name is Ed Hawthorne, and I am proud to serve as the President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, a federation of hundreds of local unions representing almost 250,000 active and retired workers in the private sector, public sector, and building trades. Our members live and work in every city and town in our state and reflect the diversity that makes Connecticut great. It is on their behalf that I submit testimony in opposition to SB 1096 An Act Concerning the Charter School Approval Process.

Connecticut has always been thoughtful and deliberative in its approach to approving and funding new charter schools. The existing process is built on the recognition that diverting scarce education resources could harm traditional PreK-12 school districts. That must continue to be the state's priority, so that all children, not just those who win a lottery, have access to the highest quality education possible. Creating a process that delivers funding to privately managed charter schools that are not required to meet the same standards on educator certification, transparency or accountability measures as our traditional public schools is problematic. It creates and perpetuates dual, competing systems with different rules for different types of schools.

There are additional concerns with this bill. It is not clear that it guarantees funding for an approved charter school after the first fiscal year. More importantly, if the funding does become automatic, it takes the fiscal responsibility away from elected officials, including the General Assembly and the Governor. It provides that authority solely to the Department of Education, which is run by appointed, not elected, civil servants. Those who make public budgeting decisions should be elected by, and held accountable to, Connecticut taxpayers. We urge the Committee to reject this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.